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AUTHOR Hore, Terry; West, Leo  
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## ABSTRACT

Topics from the Williams Committee Report and implications for Monash University and Australian higher education are considered. After considering strengths and weaknesses of the report, attention is directed to the potential for growth in higher education, contracting and recurrent education, access/selection and attrition, efficiency and evaluation, research, teaching, and tenure and flexibility. The report suggests that the demand and economic factors in Australia will allow limited growth in universities between now and the year 2001, and that the political climate will allow it to occur. The notion of "portability" allows Monash University to accept students who have part qualifications from other institutions. The report recommends that a study be commissioned to investigate the reasons for the low graduation rates of part-time and external students. The Committee places considerable emphasis on the use of contracting resources across sectors to make better use of resources and to extend educational opportunities. For example, departments experiencing a decline or nongrowth in enrollments could provide advanced education courses on a contract basis. A checklist for assessing the effectiveness of universities, recommended by the Committee, is included. It is recommended that full-time attention to research by academic staff be made possible by appointing temporary staff to provide necessary teaching. Recommendations are also directed to improving the quality of teaching and to the need for flexibility with regard to teacher employment issues. (SW)

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MONASH UNIVERSITY

AND THE WILLIAMS COMMITTEE REPORT

Terry Hore

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# NOTES on Higher Education

## MONASH UNIVERSITY AND THE WILLIAMS COMMITTEE REPORT\*

Terry Hore

### INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights and discusses some topics from the Report, so that Monash University through its various formal boards and informal associations may be better informed about the Williams Committee Report, and aware of possible consequences to Monash University and Australian higher education.

The Williams Committee Report contains 1,520 pages altogether, printed in three volumes. The length and the difficulty in obtaining copies of the Report probably mean that the majority of Monash University staff will not have had the chance to read it.

Over the last few weeks HEARU staff have spent many hours with Professor Williams in lectures about, and discussions of, the Report and so it may be appropriate for us to write about some aspects of the Report which need the consideration of Monash University staff. While the Report is of an "evolutionary nature" the recommendations "taken together will have a considerable cumulative effect on practices in the three post-secondary sectors" (I, p.iii). (*The convention to be used in this issue for referencing the Report will be to indicate the Volume in Roman numerals followed by the page numbers; so that I, p.44 and III, p.50 refer to Volume 1 page 44 and Volume 3 page 50 respectively. In some cases the number of the paragraph cited will appear in front of the Roman numeral.*)

### Strengths and Weaknesses

The Report has strengths and weaknesses. One set of deficiencies relates to minor matters of organization; the idea of review chapters following each chapter in Volume 1 is a good one once the reader realizes, that for example, paragraph 5.45 is not the same as paragraph R5.45 (the latter refers to a paragraph within the review of chapter 5), and that the review chapters contain additional material and even material which could be seen as conflicting with the chapter proper. Volume 2 contains a complete list of submissions, details of work commissioned by the Committee and other background information. Volume 3 is the summary statement of the

Report and contains all recommendations, cross-referenced to chapter reviews (not to the detailed discussions in the chapters themselves). There are problems in Volume 3 in that the recommendations are discussed in a different order to the sequence established in Volume 1 and in the migration from Volume 1 to Volume 3 significant words have changed, for example in Volume 1 page 200 the recommendation R5.24 reads:

"The Committee recommends that the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee appoint an expert working party to formulate programs for staff in the theory and practice of teaching, curriculum development and examining, and then later consider **whether** satisfactory participation in such programs should become a normal condition of tenured appointment."

In Volume 3, page 13 the supposedly same recommendation R5.24 reads:

"The Committee recommends that the AVCC appoint an expert working party to formulate programs for staff in the theory and practice of teaching, curriculum development and examining, and then later consider **how** satisfactory participation in such programs might become a normal condition of tenured appointment."

Perhaps this can be put down to sloppy drafting but there is a crucial difference between "whether" and "how".

The second type of deficiency is even more serious. The Report contains many unsupported statements alongside well-documented ones, and again this may be a drafting or editing problem but poorly researched statements weaken not only that item but also the more carefully considered proposals. The majority of the Monash community will see only the summary of Chapter 5, and on its own, it is inadequate material on which to base discussions of likely consequences for Monash University.

Despite these weaknesses the general tenor of the Report will be greeted with some satisfaction by members of the university community. The Report lends support to many of the traditions of universities, such as university autonomy, both in terms of internal government, through the committee structure (I, p.180) and in funding. R16.5 (I, p.725) recommends a return to full triennial funding and a consequent revision of the States Grants (Tertiary Education Assistance) Act and R16.9 (I, p.727) recommends that the co-ordination of the university sector continue to be predominantly a Commonwealth responsibility and that universities continue to make submissions directly to the Tertiary Education Commission. It supports an increase in special research grants from 0.7% in 1978 to 2.13% in 1981 (R5.35, I, p.206) and suggests that "an increase in the proportion of post-graduate students could easily be accommodated" (I, p.769). The Report argues for study leave and sees the TEC's proposals to reduce the emphasis on study leave as "very questionable" (I, p.179). Concern with the quality of teaching appears in several paragraphs (R5.9, R5.23 and R5.24), and tenure is defended (5.78, I, p.179) with certain provisos, which will be discussed later in these notes.

Superficially then the Report is "satisfactory" and was seen by the Committee of Deans in their report to the Professorial Board (P50/79) in May, 1979 as "... containing few new proposals of direct relevance to the future of Monash University".

The purpose of this issue of *Notes on Higher Education* is to examine the complacency which is induced through reading only the summary, and to discuss statements made throughout the Report which require Monash University to have an overt policy and stated procedures on a number of issues.

The remainder of this paper is divided into two parts, the first is written by Leo West of HEARU, who considers the potential for growth stated or implied in the report; in the second part Terry Hore continues the examination of specific aspects of the report begun in the introduction.

\* *Education, Training and Employment: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training.*  
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979.

## POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

Leo West

The discontinuity in University growth and funding that occurred in 1975/76 gave birth to a new descriptive term for universities: the "steady state". There have been some differences of opinion about the likely life time of this new condition. The optimists believed that this was merely a marking time period and that soon we will see a return to the "old days". The pessimists took the view that the best we could hope for was that it remained a "steady" state for the rest of the century – and not a declining or to use the political euphemism a "negative growth" period.

Hence the Williams Committee of Inquiry was particularly important. It was certain to examine the medium and long term growth of universities and was likely to provide a blueprint that would allow a return to an orderly, even if it was to be a declining, development of universities in the future.

This aspect of the inquiry is critical to universities so I intend to describe the judgements of the Williams Committee on this matter and the implications of these for universities in general and Monash in particular.

It must be recognised that the question of growth in universities is a two edged sword. There is the question of demand and the question of economics. Stated simply: does the community want it? and, can the country afford it? It should also be seen that these are now political questions. University education in this country is no longer demand driven. It is no longer accepted that, provided there are students who want to, and are able to, undertake university education, the government will provide finance for them.

The Williams Report makes a careful consideration of both these questions. In Volume I, Chapter 2, a detailed discussion is provided of various indexes of participation in, and expenditure on, higher education in the past and present; and in Chapter 3 the implications of different trends in these for future growth are discussed.

Public expenditure on education has risen from \$252m or 2.1 percent of GDP in 1957–8 to \$4732m or 5.8 percent of GDP in 1976–7. Of these totals, university expenditure was \$73m (0.49 percent of GDP) in 1957–8 and \$651m (0.80 percent of GDP) in 1976–7. These figures are shown in more detail and compared to the other sectors in Table 1 (taken from Table 2.3 in the Williams Report, I, p.34).

**Table 1. Public Expenditure on Education (\$m)**

|                      | 1961–2             | 1967–8      | 1976–7       |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Schools              | 289 (1.95% of GDP) | 509 (2.10%) | 2906 (3.57%) |
| Universities         | 73 (0.49%)         | 149 (0.61%) | 651 (0.80%)  |
| Other Post Secondary | 32 (0.22%)         | 92 (0.38%)  | 783 (0.96%)  |
| Other                | 36 (0.24%)         | 51 (0.21%)  | 392 (0.48%)  |
| Total                | 429 (2.9%)         | 801 (3.3%)  | 4732 (5.8%)  |

There is, of course, no value-free amount that a country like Australia *should* spend on higher education, and although comparisons with other countries can be useful, the real determinants of what is the correct amount are political ones. Education must compete with other sectors of government expenditure within the constraints of overall fiscal policies and changing community attitudes towards higher education.

Williams provides important data impinging on these constraints. Unlike earlier periods, the size of the education population (people undertaking education) is declining relative to the working population. Using Williams' "demographic index" (I, p.42), the decline will be from 112 in 1967 to 103 in 1977 to an estimated 80 in 2001. The political implications of this are important, for the size of the working population directly influences the size of the public expenditure purse. Expenditure on education will be able to increase

in real terms while it declines as a proportion of the GDP. As Williams pointed out:

"That movement [the movement in the demographic index cited above] will, all other things being equal, reduce expenditure on education relative to GDP and diminish the recent strong pressure coming from the budgetary processes to reduce the real grants per student in universities and colleges of advanced education" (I, p.44).

This indicates that a return to demand driven enrolments is politically feasible, although it must be realized that this conclusion includes assumptions about growth in the economy which may not be realized. I will return to this matter later.

The Report clearly maps present and past demand patterns. It documents the factors influencing the growth during the last two decades, indicating once again, the dominating role of secondary school retention rates on the past increased demand, and the significant slow down in this factor. For example the Report notes that if the 1957 secondary school retention rate had been maintained, the 1977 enrolments in universities and colleges would have been only 88,050 compared with the actual figure of 298,723.

In Chapter 3, the Report attempts four predictions of student numbers, staff numbers and costs for universities until the year 2001. The first prediction is more or less equivalent to an extrapolation of the current triennium, the second allows for moderate growth, the third significant growth and the fourth moderate cut back. (Readers of the Report should note that in Volume 2, the projections are numbered in a different order to Volume 1). The recommendation of the Committee is not definite. The projections are presented only as such and apparently not as recommendations. They are then examined for their plausibility. In this examination the Committee considers projection 2 as the most plausible on both demographic and political grounds.

"Projection 2 fits the proclaimed objectives of Governments rather better than projection 1" (I, p.78).

"Projection 2 reflects the demographic prospects more than the other projections. . ." (I, p.63).

The final result of these projections is the production of a combined projection 1 (1977 to 1981) – projection 2 (1986 to 2001) model, with a transition from 1981 to 1986. This combined projection implies some modest growth. Using numbers predicted under projections 1 and 2 (Tables 3.4, 3.5, I, pp.52–3), and assuming a changeover from projection 1 to projection 2 as a policy in 1986, I have estimated university numbers to 2001 (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Estimated University Student Numbers using Projection 1 to 1986 and Projection 2 to 2001 (no account taken of changes in other factors).**

| Year | Estimated Number<br>(in 000's) |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 1977 | 158.4                          |
| 1981 | 162.8                          |
| 1986 | 164.4                          |
| 1991 | 175.0                          |
| 1996 | 170.0                          |
| 2001 | 174.0                          |

This yields an overall growth rate of 9.85 percent in university numbers.

Despite the earlier comment, there is some evidence that this is a recommendation. In Chapter 17, the Report states:

"The Committee recommends that as in projection 2 the growth in the number of university students be substantially less than the growth in other sectors" (I, p.770).

and at a talk at Monash, Williams stated:

"... we provided for growth, up to the end of the century, of 10 percent in full time equivalent students in universities..."  
(*Monash Reporter*, May 8, 1979, p.4)

So there may be an *implied recommendation concerning growth* in the universities. However this should be viewed against a clear "let out" clause

"At present these [projection 4] do not seem to be very realistic assumptions... and the Government's stated objectives... implies that this projection should not be set as a possible objective. *In the context of assumed high unemployment and very low growth in GDP it might however be considered as a possible outcome*".  
(1, p.64, emphasis added).

To return to my original questions, it seems reasonable to state that Williams has concluded (if not recommended), that the country can afford a moderate growth in university enrolments. In addition, he implies that the special research grant would be returned to 2.13 percent from 1981 (proposed by the TEC for 1981), and that recurrent grants be raised by 1.5 percent per annum for the years to 1980.

The Report is not quite as clear with respect to student demand, but it does provide guidelines for the likely avenues of growth. Projection 2 is based on three main assumptions:

- (a) that the proportion of the school cohort proceeding directly from school to university will remain constant at 1977 levels,
- (b) that indirect entrants (those with a 2 year or more break between school and university) will grow in proportion to the 20-40 age group,
- and (c) that the ratio of higher degree students and "other" students to bachelor degree students to remain at the 1977 level.

It should be noted, however, that the Committee gave tacit approval to an increase in higher degree students beyond this level:

"It was convenient in making the projection to maintain post-graduate students as a constant percentage of total students for purposes of costing, but the assumption is not an essential part of the projection. An increase in the proportion of post-graduate students could easily be accommodated" (1, p.769).

The implications of this are very significant. The age cohort growth rates will decline dramatically and there will be an actual reduction in absolute numbers some time in the late 1980's or early 1990's. The secondary school retention rate has levelled out (see Table 1.2, I, p.11) and in Victoria shows some signs of declining. Since this rate is still well below the North American rate some commentators see some hope for growth, but it is generally conceded that this is unlikely. Recent trends in the proportion of this group continuing to universities show a decline. (Table 3.12, I, p.63). Taken together these factors indicate that there is little, if any, growth in numbers to be achieved in the *number* (as opposed to the proportion, which Williams assumes will remain constant) of students proceeding directly from school to university.

On the other hand, the growth in the 20-40 year age group is quite significant (see Table 13.2, I, p.587). Thus any growth in university enrolments is assumed to be in the indirect entrants rather than normal entrants.

How reasonable is this expectation? Recently, there were some shudders around higher education in Australia that the mature age student "boom" might be over, but these have usually been based on institutional trends rather than a system wide study. At Monash, their numbers are holding up.

Some unpublished research by HEARU concerning the backgrounds of these people and their reasons for coming indicate that continued growth is likely. Some European results support this. It seems that the decline in tertiary participation rate experienced in most European countries during the middle 1970's was a postponing rather than a rejecting of entry into higher education (see Cerych, L. Towards zero growth in higher education. *Paedagogica Europea*, 1977, 12, 11-20).

In summary, I think that we can conclude that the demand and economic factors will allow limited growth in universities between now and the year 2001 and that the Williams Report, if not actually recommending this, has anticipated that the political climate will allow it to occur.

Given this conclusion, what are the implications for Monash? If growth is to come from the pool of indirect entrants, how can Monash take advantage of this? The Williams Report provides some avenues for maintaining limited growth. Three of these, "contracting", "portability" and "late entry" will be discussed in the next section.

## SPECIFIC TOPICS IN THE WILLIAMS REPORT

Terry Hore

One could take the view that the Committee has "passed the buck" on several topics to other bodies, such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and therefore no consideration needs to be given by Monash University to those issues until we are directly requested to do so. In this section I wish to point out that several issues have potentially great importance to Monash University and we should consider them rationally *before* we are forced to react, to requests from Commonwealth or State agencies, with hastily conceived responses.

The issues raised here are not intended to be an exhaustive list, nor are the comments intended to provide a definitive statement, but simply to show the sort of questions this community should be discussing.

The topics to be considered are:

- \* access, selection and attrition
- \* contracting and recurrent education
- \* efficiency and evaluation
- \* research
- \* teaching
- \* tenure and flexibility

### Access, selection and attrition

The notion of "portability" allows Monash University to accept students who have part qualifications from other institutions. Williams, in the Theodore Fink Memorial Lecture and Seminars (University of Melbourne, April, 1979), was very critical of what he called the "exclusive dealing" of some universities in allowing credits. Monash should at least examine its regulations concerning credits for courses or part-courses taken in other institutions with a view to increasing entrants from this source. It should be noted that approximately one half of the over-25 age group entrants to Monash have a previous tertiary experience (HEARU, unpublished research), so there is evidence that demand exists.

The Committee, in discussing late entry, identified three types of late entrant -- those who develop an interest several years after leaving school, those who need new knowledge because of technological advances and those who were not attracted immediately at the end of school and so delayed entry. At Monash some faculties, especially Arts and Law, have significant numbers of entrants who fall into these categories. Most of these students have entered with normal qualifications (rather than under the Early Leavers' Scheme). The faculties of Science and Engineering have much lower participation rates by these students. It is not clear whether this is due to a lack of interest in these disciplines by late entrants, a lack of formal qualifications in science and mathematics, or some other factors. However, in the light of the Williams projections, it is important that Monash examine whether there is a pool of late entrants that could be attracted to science and engineering and how they could best be attracted.

There is a need expressed for the improvement of methods of selection to identify those 28% of students who do not graduate, but in the same paragraph 5.82 (I, p.182) it is acknowledged that any calculation concerned with the identification and exclusion of these 28% "... is not a very useful calculation because it is not known how to identify that 28 percent". Setting higher standards of entry was considered, but the Committee cites the Monash data from *The 1961 Study* (I, p.182) which show that to achieve a graduation rate of 75 percent it would have been necessary to exclude 27 percent of those who did commence (45 percent of whom graduated). The question becomes one of cost; 1) the cost of rejecting someone who would have graduated and 2) the cost of accepting someone who would have failed. The first is a private cost but also a social cost. The second is a cost which could be seen by government as a waste of money or a necessary investment, despite its low return. Because of the inability of selection devices to be 100 percent or even 75 percent accurate, errors of the type 1 and 2 above will always be made and politicians, not educators, will decide what is the correct balance between "high pass rates" and "extension of opportunities for education".

Nevertheless, there is concern over high failure rates and with each call for more information and research (for example, on differences in graduation rates and on the reasons for high attrition rates of part-time and external students) we see the Committee's concern for what happens to the students *after* selection namely, quality of teaching (5.56, I, p.168) and R5.23 (I, p.200) recommends that a study be commissioned to investigate the reasons for the low graduation rates of part-time and external students, and later (I, p.519) it gives the reason for this recommendation "... to make possible an effective review of methods of selection *and styles of teaching*". (Emphasis added).

It has been said recently in the Professorial Board that Monash University should be "proud of its attrition rate". The report appears to be moving closer to the position of our North American colleagues who are called upon to prove that none of the fault, for a student's failure, rests with them "... the day is past when institutions could lay the full blame of student failure on the shoulders of the student himself". (Davis, Abedor & Witt, 1976, p.113). This point will be picked up again later under "efficiency and evaluation"; but suffice it here to say that if *some* blame for student failure can be placed on the shoulders of the staff, then Mr Justice Kirby's forecast (*The Australian*, 5 May, 1979) that students would soon be suing teachers for "incompetent or out-of-date teaching" becomes more probable.

### Contracting and recurrent education

The Committee placed considerable emphasis on the use of contracting resources across sectors to make better use of resources and to extend educational opportunities (R3.20, I, p.79), for example departments experiencing a decline or non-growth in enrolments could provide advanced education (UG2) courses on a contract basis. In R5.26 (I, p.201) it was recommended that "recurrent funds should include a realistic allowance for non-award courses for graduates ..." and this reaffirms the stance taken in the *Sixth Report* of the Universities Commission of the recommended allowance for recurrent education, given there as one percent of recurrent costs for universities. Until continuing education in the professions reaches the stage of compulsion one sees in North America, it may be that the two ideas of contracting and of the funding provisions for recurrent education could come together for the supply of recurrent education to professional associations.

### Efficiency and evaluation

One of the Committee's terms of reference ((a) sub-section viii, I, p.2) required the Committee to consider and advise on "the means

of evaluating the quality and efficiency of the system". That this was included as one of the terms of reference indicates the response of government to what the Report calls a marked change in public attitude to expenditure on higher education. In R18.36 (I, p.814) it is noted that

"Some of the major problems at the moment arise not from the failure of these institutions [universities and CAE's] to manage their own affairs, but from a change in the tempo of growth and in the climate of opinion".

The same paragraph goes on to say that there are "uncomfortable adjustments to be made in universities and colleges ..." One would anticipate from the literature in countries which have already faced similar situations, that "uncomfortable adjustments" relate to the closer scrutiny to which universities are subjected. It is a defense to say that universities are constantly under peer review through their publications, academic boards, etc., and the report agrees with this notion (18.20 I, p.792), but it is *not* our peers who are now asking the questions. R18.37 (I, p.814) states that efficiency in the system depends upon 1) Community attitudes, 2) Government willingness to provide finance, 3) Commonwealth and State Boards and Commissions and 4) the institutions "to make good use of their financial and physical resources". In North America it has been the power of the community and government which has introduced stringent evaluation procedures both in word,

"Educators must develop and adopt relevant standards of accountability. Otherwise, state legislatures, under pressures from their constituencies, will impose efficiency criteria ..." (Davis, Abedor & Witt, 1976, p.112)

and in deed; Resolution 13 in California slashed 45 percent from the education budget. Peer review did not prevent this.

The Committee (R5.45, I, p.212), and the Staff Association at the Australian National University (18.27, I, p.795) both suggested that internal review by appropriate academic bodies should be considered and the ANU Staff Association commended the system of regular departmental reviews as a "... genuine and responsible exercise of academic freedom ..."

What is Monash University's policy towards "regular departmental reviews"? Currently, the answer is that Monash does not have a policy. How would Monash respond if the Tertiary Education Commission's "Evaluative Studies Program", had focused on "Engineering Education" rather than "Nursing Education"?

The TEC sought to encourage "... a variety of approaches ranging from intra-institutional self-critical assessments to studies conducted across sectoral, institutional and State boundaries" (*Report for the 1979-81 Triennium*, Vol. 1, p.81). One could anticipate that some of the money (\$180,000 in 1979) would be granted to establish a system of regular internal review, and this strategy is preferable to Monash being the subject of a review funded by the TEC but established by another university or a college of technology or advanced education.

How would Monash respond to the checklist for assessing the effectiveness of universities, colleges and TAFE? (R18.23, I, pp.809-810) I include the checklist in full:

- (a) What are the objectives of the institution?
- (b) Are the procedures for the selection of staff, the admission of students and the design of courses consistent with the objectives?
- (c) What are the provisions for the induction of staff, staff development, and assessments of performance?
- (d) Are there codes of professional conduct designed to ensure high quality in teaching and, where relevant, research?
- (e) What are the attrition rates?
- (f) Are attrition rates regarded as reasonable in the light of admissions policies?
- (g) Is there provision for a review of examination results in credit courses in the different subjects and for various types of students?

- (h) What arrangements are there to review methods of teaching and examining, and curricula, in the light of examination results, and comments from students, professional or para-professional associations, and employers?
- (i) How are academic plans and financial plans related?
- (j) Is there co-operation between similar institutions in the use of comparative cost studies and performance indicators in resource management?
- (k) Is the structure of authority and the decision processes in the institution such that adequate provision is made to redeploy resources to provide for new fields of study, a different balance in existing fields of study, changes in degree regulations which affect student numbers in particular subjects, shifts in students' interests or in national needs?
- (l) What provisions are there for external appraisals as well as for internal appraisals that do not just rely on the directly interested parties?

For institutions that conduct research there is a further set of questions:

- (m) Is there an explicit policy on the balance between teaching and research in different subjects and reflected in the allocation of academic and support staff?
- (n) Are block grants for research allocated in a general manner or on the basis of project assessment?
- (o) Is it policy to identify and give special support to individuals with the greatest research capacity?
- (p) Are there arrangements for (short or longer term) inter-disciplinary research projects?

Should we not be trying to answer these questions now?

Attention was drawn to the responsibilities of governing bodies (i.e. The Monash University Council) to seek reliable information in order to make informed judgments on the "reasons for attrition rates, on the efficiency of Faculties and Departments in the pursuit of their objectives which are in any case seldom written down, on how far the efficiency of the staff in teaching and examining could be improved by staff development programs . . ." (I, pp.212-213). The Committee admits that while " . . . it may never be possible to provide adequate information on these issues, it should be possible to improve the provision" (I, p.213).

The message, which permeates the whole Report is that, although it may be difficult, institutions should make the effort to evaluate themselves. The Committee were aware that much of the information cannot be quantitative and they stated that " . . . qualitative analyses, difficult though they may be, cannot, and should not, be avoided" (I, p.799).

Academic staff, nurtured in times of expansion, may find it difficult to take these implicit directions seriously and perhaps are optimistic that there will be upturns in the economy, resurgence of support from governments, the electorate, business and industry. But, if we look at comparable systems in other countries we see increasing government intervention either by attaching conditions to the funds they provide (Stein, 1979), or through warning statements, for example, if universities " . . . did not make the extremely difficult decisions necessary, the government would have to impose its own solution" (Mrs. Williams, Secretary of State for Education and Science, reported in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 24 March, 1978).

We have seen slight signs of federal intervention in Australia, the study leave issue and recent statements about target figures for student numbers are a couple of examples. But we are likely to follow the pattern set overseas, of a greater emphasis on "accountability" which will entail a careful inspection of what we say we do, what we *do* and *how* we do it. Professorial Board paper P69/79 by Professor P. J. Fensham gives an example of one American university's attempt to develop a mechanism for the evaluation of

their "current academic life and its prospects". That university saw the writing on the wall and did something about it. Professor Fensham's question was "Should we not begin to develop policies and procedures for self-evaluation now?"

## Research

Apart from reiterating the facts about declining support for research both from recurrent and through the Australian Research Grants Committee (ARGC) and other funding bodies, this section contains some radical ideas among the expected ones. One would expect from the strong support for research in universities in Volume 1 that the Committee would support increases in special research grants to build up post-graduate centres, and also to increase funds to ARGC and some other funding bodies (R5.35, I, p.206), and a consequent increase in Commonwealth Post-Graduate Awards to return to the levels of 1975 and 1976 with a proportion of these awards available for training at the proposed post-graduate centres (R5.36, I, p.207).

The more radical and less expected statements concerned research staff and research students. In 5.48 (I, p.165) the Committee wondered " . . . whether universities give sufficient attention to identifying those with the greatest capacity for research and in arranging the allocation of resources accordingly", and in discussions relating to recommendation R5.37, (I, pp.207-208) the Committee commented on the need in some special research projects for the full-time attention of tenured academic staff. Two proposals are suggested, first, that universities should try to make this possible by appointing temporary staff to provide the necessary teaching. Secondly, and more directly related to the recommendation (R5.37) which says that "inter-disciplinary research projects with a limited life should qualify for grants from the proposed research funds to develop concentrations of post-graduate training and research", the Report suggests that universities

" . . . should formulate explicit policies on the expected division of staff time between teaching and research, and on the differences in ratios of academic staff to students and academic staff to technical and administrative staff, that reflect differences in the nature of research and the research potential" (I, p.208).

It was argued that this would make it easier to make a case for the cost of temporary staff to replace the full-time tenured staff during the period of a full-time commitment to some research project. Staff preparing research grant proposals should note this development.

The discussions around 5.48 and R5.37 are quite similar to the ideas raised by Professor B. O. West in his chapter on "Tertiary academic staff and research" in Hore, Linke & West (1978, p.128) in which he said that

" . . . universities may have to accept that staff members should be allowed to move into one of the three categories which may be conveniently called teacher-only, teacher-researcher, or researcher-only".

On research students the Report states that while strongly supporting expansion by universities of post-graduate research by outstanding students, the Committee had in mind the expectation that many of these students would enter careers outside the universities, due to low staff mobility, and therefore the

" . . . universities should review their post-graduate programs in the light of this change in the employment opportunities for their post-graduate students. There is evidence that very highly specialized Ph.D. programs do not always provide the most useful and stimulating training for students in applied research or for problem-solving in complex situations" (R5.39, I, p.209).

This last point demonstrates the need to read Volume 1, for here is an important suggestion which does not find its way into a specific recommendation.

## Teaching

The discussion of attrition rates centred around two issues, selection and teaching, and throughout the Report emphasis is put upon the quality of teaching. While it is agreed that the percentage of students "who demonstrate a capacity to profit from university studies depends on the ability and motivation of the students admitted . . .", the Committee added to this statement "... and on the standards of teaching and examining in the universities" (R5.9, I, p.192). Considering the low graduation rates of part-time and external students the Committee suggested that "Perhaps there should be different methods of selection and different styles of teaching" (R5.23, I, p.200). On the distribution of teaching load between the years and departments, the report states that it

"... is better than it was though not yet ideal, and insufficient attention is given to the provision of small group teaching tutorials and oral appraisals of essays and examinations in first year" (5.58, I, p.169).

Anticipating the response that universities do not have the staff to do this, and in some way agreeing with this proposition (I, p.769), the next sentence reads

"Staffing is such that it is not necessary for universities to seem impersonal. To far too many first year students the university is a somewhat cold and impersonal place by comparison with school" (I, p.169).

The concern for students appears also in the suggestions about the provision of "opportunities" during first term for new students to improve their techniques of learning (R5.20, I, p.199), and in recommendation R5.21(I, p.199) which says that universities should discuss with the Universities Commission the introduction of what the Committee calls "rehabilitation courses"; summer courses for those students in first and second year subjects who fail during the normal academic year, with supplementary examinations, in order to contribute to "better graduation rates". This runs somewhat contrary to "pride in attrition rates" following the normal teaching/examining sequence.

In his talk at Monash University (30 March, 1979) Professor Williams said that university staff should "give up the conceit that we are all born teachers"; this sentiment is reflected in R5.24 (I, p.200) which recommends that programs for staff be formulated (by an expert working party of the AV-CC) "in the theory and practice of teaching, curriculum development and examining . . ."

Redesign of courses and examinations to help handicapped students is mentioned (R11.38, I, p.529) and Monash University is cited as one university which invited handicapped students, on their enrolment form, to indicate the nature of their problem. This initiative was taken up in a recommendation that all post-secondary institutions make provision for such a statement and provide special counselling services for handicapped students (R11.39, I, p.529).

Concern for what happens to students *after selection*, during the teaching/learning process, is an aspect of this Report which should not be ignored.

## Tenure and flexibility

As it was stated in the introduction tenure is supported as long as it "is not used to protect inefficiency, idleness or other activities that impede the processes of teaching, learning and research" (I, p.180). The Committee asks the AV-CC to consider "whether" or "how" (depending on which version of the recommendation R5.24 you read) the programs on teaching, etc., should become a condition of tenure. This may look significant but it is rather like the recent move in the Victorian Government, to provide free public transport for World War I veterans, the numbers are so small that the effect is minimal.

In the discussions on tenure many important points are raised which require the consideration of university administrations and

staff associations, because they relate to the need for flexibility. In many cases the topics parallel those published in the previous issue of *Notes on Higher Education* (No. 13, June, 1978) called "Crisis Management". The Committee asks (I, p.180):

- whether procedures for dismissal in the case of failure to perform effectively are adequate,
- how are universities to provide for flexible responses to changes in priorities in teaching and research,
- what is the scope for early retirements as well as providing for a proportion of limited term and part-term appointments.

In several other places in the Report the introduction of early retirement schemes is mentioned (2.37, I, p.43; R5.40, I, pp.209-210) as a means of obtaining flexibility.

"To a limited extent flexibility can be created by early retirements, provisions for retraining and the sharing of staff by other institutions. *But universities will also need to make preparation for redundancy . . .*" (p.209-210, emphasis added).

Perhaps the time is now ripe for the administration and staff association to renew negotiations on the "Tenure Statute" before a Bill, similar to the Commonwealth Employees Redeployment and Retirement Bill, is designed for university staff.

## Conclusion

There is much of interest in the main body (Volume 1) of the Williams Report which will be lost to those people who content themselves with a reading of the Summary (Volume 3, which is in itself a summary of the Review Chapters).

## References

- DAVIS, R. H., ABEDOR, A. J. and WITT, P. W. F. *Commitment to excellence: a case study in educational innovation*. Michigan: Michigan State University, 1976.
- HORE, T., LINKE, R. D. and WEST, L. H. T. (eds.) *The future of higher education in Australia*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1978.
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*Issue No. 14 was edited by Terry Hore and any question or comments should be directed to him on Extension 3269 or % HEARU, Law Building, Monash University.*

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## Informal Study Groups

Because the Williams Report is to be discussed in Faculty Boards and because most staff will have limited access to the full report, HEARU will be pleased to organize a series of informal lunch-time sessions on "What the Williams Report says . . ." about any of the topics raised in these *Notes* or any other subject to be found in the report.

If you are interested in taking part in these informal groups please ring TERRY HORE (Ext. 3269), LEO WEST (Ext. 3274) or HELEN KEOGH (Ext. 3270), or complete the form below and return it to HEARU, c/o Law Building.



## Informal Study Groups

Name .....

Dept ..... Extension .....

I would like to join an informal study group to discuss the following topic(s) .....

.....

The best days for me to join a *lunch-time* discussion group are .....

.....

Signature .....

Return to HEARU, c/o Law Building, Monash University.

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